

Annual Report

1999–2000

Voluntary Planning

Voluntary Planning is a voluntary association of non-government individuals and groups, funded by the Government of Nova Scotia, that operates at arm's length from government to promote sustainable development.

The Mission of Voluntary Planning

To provide for the effective involvement of the non-government sector in planning for sustainable development.

Sustainable development is a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development and institutional change are made consistent with future as well as present needs.

Objectives of Voluntary Planning

To facilitate the identification of problems and opportunities by the non-government sector and to highlight appropriate private and public resources available to address these problems and opportunities.

To involve the non-government sector in the analysis of government policy and legislative proposals during the process of their development and prior to final approval.

Logo

The cover shows the Voluntary Planning logo. The map of the Province of Nova Scotia superimposed on a gradually ascending bar chart represents Voluntary Planning's commitment to the increased well-being and prosperity of Nova Scotians. Executed in earthy bronze, it is a reminder of the common ground and common purpose that we share.

Table of Contents

Co-chair's Message	1
Board Committee Reports	
Voluntary Planning Board and Executive Committee	3
Climate Change Consultation Process	6
Financial Services Infrastructure Committee	7
Fiscal Management Task Force	8
Labour Management Forum	9
Nova Scotia Forest Action Plan Working Group	10
Sector Committee Reports	
Community Development Sector	12
Construction Sector	14
Energy Sector	15
Environment and Economy Sector	17
Fisheries and Marine Core Group	18
Forest Sector	20
Human Resources Sector	22
Land Resources Coordinating Council	24
Mineral Resources Sector	25
Taxation Sector	26
Tourism Sector	28
Trade/Investment Negotiations and Agreements Committee	30
Transportation Sector	31
Appendices	
Reports	35
Calendar of Events for 1999-2000	36
Voluntary Planning Executive and Board	37
Voluntary Planning Staff	38

Co-chair's Message



Robert P. Radchuck
Co-chair

Nova Scotia finds itself in a position of strength and, at the same time, of peril as we leave the 20th century and begin to participate fully in the knowledge economy of the new millennium.

Economic growth and optimism continue as strong factors in our immediate and long-term future. The realities of Sable gas have and in the coming years will exert a positive influence on our economy. Knowledge-based industries present a considerable opportunity as Nova Scotia capitalizes on its historic learning focus with a well-educated and energetic workforce.

Expanding information technology, bio-technology, culture, and tourism sectors offer yet more reasons for optimism. And resource-based sectors, while not receiving such a high profile, continue as the backbone of the provincial economy.

However, government must provide strong leadership, make difficult decisions, and articulate a broadly supported vision and strategy for the future. Without this we run the risk of a further-reduced credit rating and its severe implications.

As the federal government and other provincial governments have turned the corner on deficit financing, we continue to struggle with this difficult issue. Serious consequences lay in wait for a province out of sync with its neighbours. While others reduce tax structures and participate with the federal government on research and development initiatives, Nova Scotia stands to lose significant ground.

Voluntary Planning has contributed to solving our fiscal crisis this year through the advice provided by the Fiscal Management Task Force. We engaged Nova Scotians in a public and focused effort to generate recommendations for government on how to attain fiscal sustainability.

The task force listened closely to what the people had to say and provided government with an unfiltered and very strongly worded report. We believe the government will listen, difficult decisions will be made, and the existing structure and very role of government will be redefined.

Voluntary Planning has made strong contributions on this and many other initiatives. Although the coming year will undoubtedly bring budgetary and organizational challenges, it is crucial that we continue to offer all citizens a real and effective opportunity to participate in public policy development. After all, democratic government in a fundamental sense means public input into the policy process.

Congratulations and thank you to the members of the Board, Executive, Sector Committees, and staff for contributing your ideas, experiences, and time to the Voluntary Planning process. You can take great pride in your accomplishments.

Board Committee Reports

Voluntary Planning Board and Executive Committee

Co-chair: Robert P. Radchuck

Voluntary Planning provides a vehicle through which the private and non-governmental sectors in Nova Scotia can provide input into economic development planning and public policy.

Voluntary Planning is structured to include a Board and Standing Committees (Executive Committee, Nominating Committee, Sector Committees, and Cross-sector Committees). The Board may from time to time establish a special committee with limited duration to deal with a specific issue.

Sector Committees established by the Board of Voluntary Planning represent a corresponding sector of the Nova Scotia economy (for example, Energy, Tourism, Transportation). Cross-sector Committees (such as Environment and Economy, Taxation, Human Resources), also referred to as Sector Committees, are established to address matters of interest to many sectors. They function in the same way as Sector Committees, with the same reporting relationship to the Board.

The Board is the decision-making authority of the organization. It authorizes the Sectors to proceed with their agenda. Issues and recommendations flow up from the Sectors through the Executive Committee to the Board to government.

The Voluntary Planning Board comprises all Sector Committees' Chairs or, where there are Co-chairs (one business and one labour), both Co-chairs serve on the Board as well as members at large.

The Board aims for a consensus among differing points of view, so the organization maintains its broad point of view and does not reflect the narrow interests of one sector or interest group.

Fiscal Management Task Force

In 1999–2000, Voluntary Planning responded to a request from the Premier by establishing and leading the Fiscal Management Task Force. The Task Force analyzed the fiscal situation of the province, looked into the state of openness and accountability, and proposed a strategic methodology for program review.

Within 90 days, Voluntary Planning had:

- established the Fiscal Management Task Force
- interviewed experts both within Nova Scotia and throughout Canada
- analyzed best practices around the world
- called for and reviewed more than 800 submissions from Nova Scotians
- released an interim report for further consultation
- conducted community meetings in all regions of the province
- held several workshops in reaction to citizen response
- prepared and released a final report which included 29 recommendations for achieving fiscal stability, economic growth, and an open and accountable government.

Highlights

In 1999–2000, Voluntary Planning:

- facilitated a joint industry and government partnership on the development of *The Way Ahead—A Strategic Framework for Coordinating Transportation Development in Nova Scotia*
- facilitated the development of the Nova Scotia Forest Action Plan in response to the National Forest Strategy
- facilitated a consultation process on climate change in partnership with Clean Nova Scotia and submitted a report on the process and recommendations for action to the Minister of Natural Resources
- hosted an open workshop on climate change and the forests in Nova Scotia and developed a Forest Sector submission to the provincial climate change consultation
- developed marketing material and conducted province-wide presentations to business and labour audiences on the benefits of non-binding arbitration

- hosted Minerals Forum 1999, Investing in the Development of Nova Scotia's Mineral Industry
- distributed the Human Resource Sector report *Towards Responsive Education* across the province
- worked with the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq community to assist in the planning for a Mi'kmaq cultural centre for the Paleo-Indian site of Debert
- provided strong Sector response to a call for submissions to the Voluntary Planning Fiscal Management Task Force
- held a Taxation Workshop providing broad-based and cross-sectoral input to the Minister of Finance on the preliminary report of the Fiscal Management Task Force and the Province's tax credit programs
- facilitated a joint industry and government partnership that brought forward recommendations on how the provincial government should proceed with the development of highway safety and rest areas in Nova Scotia
- hosted meetings of Community Development Training Providers
- served as an intervenor at regulatory hearings for distribution of natural gas in Nova Scotia

Guest Speakers to the Board

- John Reynolds, Energy Sector
Update on Hearing Process for a Provincial Natural Gas Distribution Franchise
- Meinhard Doelle, Executive Director, Clean Nova Scotia, and George Foote, Research Officer, Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources
Climate Change Consultation Process
- Barry Diamond, Chair, Nova Scotia Forest Action Plan Working Group
Nova Scotia Forest Action Plan
- Bernie MacDonald, Director of Benefits and Training, and Frank Sommerville, Benefits Officer, Nova Scotia Petroleum Directorate
Potential Economic Opportunities from Offshore Oil and Gas
- Ivano Andriani, Co-Chair, Labour Management Forum
Overview of the Non-binding Arbitration Process
- Allan Shaw, Chair, Fiscal Management Task Force
Summary Findings of Public Consultation Process

- Dan Brown, Co-Chair, Climate Change Consultation Process
Input & recommendations from climate change consultation process
- Hank Stackhouse, Regional Vice President, Operations for Atlantic Canada—Delta Hotels and Joe Gillivan, Holiday Inn Select Halifax Centre
Deregulation of Retail Store Hours in Nova Scotia

Climate Change Consultation Process

Co-chairs: Dan Brown—Voluntary Planning
Don Zwicker—Clean Nova Scotia

At the request of the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources and the Interdepartmental Committee on Climate Change, Voluntary Planning and Clean Nova Scotia consulted with Nova Scotians in preparation for developing a provincial climate change strategy.

Voluntary Planning Taxation Sector member Ron Robichaud assisted in Yarmouth, Energy Sector member Lucia MacIsaac assisted in Sydney, and former Chair of the Environment and Economy Sector Ray Côté assisted in Dartmouth.

Consultation workshops were held in six locations around the province: Amherst, Bridgewater, Antigonish, Sydney, Yarmouth, and Dartmouth. The sessions took place from November 8 to November 29, 1999, with 147 participants. An additional 20 participants took part in a special industry workshop sponsored by the Voluntary Planning Forest Sector. Twenty-eight organizations and individuals submitted their views.

Staff from the Department of Natural Resources and Clean Nova Scotia attended the sessions as observers and to respond to questions. At the beginning of each workshop, staff provided an overview of the science of climate change and current issues.

A report on the process was submitted to the Department of Natural Resources, with specific recommendations for their consideration in the development of a provincial climate change strategy. The department posted a copy of the final report on its website, www.gov.ns.ca/natr.

Financial Services Infrastructure Committee

Chair: Alex Mombourquette

In January 1998, the Board of Voluntary Planning approved the establishment of a working committee to review the potential impacts of the *Report from the Task Force on the Future of the Canadian Financial Services Sector* (the MacKay Report) on businesses in Nova Scotia.

The committee was mandated to:

- determine how the recommendations in the MacKay report will affect Nova Scotia
- recommend, if necessary, ways to build a financial services sector to meet the needs of Nova Scotian-owned businesses

The committee concluded that the MacKay Report would have little if any effect on businesses in Nova Scotia, although some of the proposed changes could affect consumers of financial services who live in Nova Scotia's rural communities, including those attempting to start small businesses.

The committee's report reiterated the long-standing concern that there appears to be insufficient funding and services available for new small businesses in the province. The committee recognized that issues surrounding small business start-ups in rural Nova Scotia have been a focus of the Community Development Sector and that any actions resulting from the MacKay Report should come from that Sector. The Taxation Committee will examine the impact of securities legislation on small business start-ups.

With the presentation of the report to the Voluntary Planning Board, the committee agreed that its work had been completed.

Fiscal Management Task Force

Chair: Allan Shaw

The Premier approached Voluntary Planning in August 1999 to review the Province's fiscal situation. Voluntary Planning then formed a special task force with a mandate to:

- review the financial position of the Province, including its Crown corporations, agencies, boards, and commissions
- submit recommendations to ensure fiscal openness and accountability, to improve government financial management, and to eliminate deficit financing
- establish a framework or guidelines that would allow for the immediate review of all government programs with a view to eliminating those that could not be justified on the basis of necessity, cost, and efficiency
- recommend on any other matters the task force may deem necessary as a result of information coming to its attention during the course of a review

Members of the task force included: Allan Shaw, Chair; Dr. Richard Goldbloom; Ed Harris; Ray Ivany; Teresa MacNeil, PhD; Sonia Thon; and Gordon Tynes. Bob Radchuck served as the link between the task force and Voluntary Planning, and Auditor General Roy Salmon served as a special advisor.

The task force investigated the Province's financial situation, interviewed Deputy Ministers, and heard from experts across Canada on best practices in fiscal management and governance. During the same time, citizens and organizations from across the province submitted comments and advice in response to a call for assistance.¹

On December 20, 1999, the task force released its preliminary report, *Shaping Nova Scotia's Future*, for discussion and commentary.

As a result of province-wide consultations in early January 2000, which included sessions with the Voluntary Planning Board and the Taxation Workshop, a number of significant changes were made to the consultation report.

Following the January 27 Board Meeting, the Fiscal Management Task Force publicly released its final report, *Taking Control of Our Future*. A news conference was held on January 31, and briefing sessions were held with the Premier, Priorities and Planning Secretariat, Deputy Ministers, and all three caucuses.

In early February, Voluntary Planning's Fiscal Management Task Force formally submitted its final report to Premier John Hamm requesting that the government publicly adopt all 29 recommendations.

The task force has agreed to stay in place informally to monitor the implementation of the recommendations. The Auditor General has agreed to report on the progress of the implementation.

Labour Management Forum

Co-chairs: Ivano Andriani
Dennis Grant

The Labour Management Forum promotes increased harmony between labour and management in the workplace and in the economy.

The Forum is co-chaired by a labour and a management representative. The membership of the Forum also has equal representation from both labour and management. Secretariat services for the Forum are provided by Voluntary Planning.

The members of the Forum are experienced representatives and individuals active in the labour relations field from both the public and private sectors.

During the past year, the agenda for the Labour Management Forum included a province-wide promotion campaign for non-binding arbitration and deliberations on the possibility of reviewing current labour legislation.

Non-binding Arbitration

A major initiative this fall included the province-wide promotion of the Forum's arbitration process. A survey of panellists and forum members resulted in the adoption of Non-binding Arbitration as the formal name for the program. A new brochure was developed along with a PowerPoint presentation and other promotional material.

More than 224 company and union representatives attended presentations in Yarmouth, Chester, Hantsport, Halifax, Dartmouth, Truro, Amherst, New Glasgow, Port Hawksbury and Sydney. Presentations were also made to the Voluntary Planning Board, the Human Resource Association of Nova Scotia (HRANS), and the Nova Scotia Government Employees Union (NSGEU).

The Forum conservatively estimates the cost for a two-day formal arbitration at \$26,000 dollars, involving over 42 days of total direct time from both parties. A non-binding arbitration hearing lasting two hours has been estimated to cost a total of \$700, involving only three days of total direct time from both parties.

The Forum estimates that more than \$2 million has been saved through the reduced number of cases proceeding to formal arbitration since 1994.

Fees for non-binding arbitration have been increased. It now costs each party a total of \$250 in direct charges including \$200 paid to one panellist and another \$50 for administration paid to Voluntary Planning.

The Forum has recently approved three new panellists in anticipation of an increased case load resulting from the recent promotions.

Applications April 1, 1999, to March 31, 2000,	31
Cases Completed	23
Cases Pending for April 2000	4
Cases Settled/Canceled Prior to Hearing	4

Cases completed since program initiation (1994) to March 31, 2000—105

Review of Labour Legislation

Reviewing Nova Scotia's labour legislation has been a topic of discussion at Forum meetings this year. In particular, members have discussed the opportunity to review the Trade Union Act. Forum members continue to discuss the merits, process, and possible timing for such a review.

Nova Scotia Forest Action Plan Working Group

Chair: Barry Diamond

The Nova Scotia Forest Action Plan Working Group was formed in 1999 to develop a provincial action plan in response to the *National Forest Strategy, 1998-2003*. The group also has a monitoring and evaluation role over the life of the national strategy.

Twenty-five provincial organizations with a stake in our forests participated on the group, which completed a series of meetings to cooperatively develop 65 action plans in July. This response differed from that of most other provinces by involving a wide range of stakeholders in developing the plans. Action plans and an appropriate lead agent from the working group were identified at meetings. Then that group member presented the plans, addressed comments by members, and re-presented the proposed plan to the group for final approval.

The Final Report: Development Phase of the N.S. Action Plan for the National Forest Strategy, 1998-2003 was completed in September 1999. Working Group Chair Barry Diamond conveyed the report to Mr. André Rousseau, Chair of the National Forest Strategy Implementation Task Force, on September 9. Voluntary Planning Board Chair Robert Radchuck conveyed the document to Nova Scotia Natural Resources Minister Ernie Fage on September 24. At the Voluntary Planning Board meeting of November 25, Barry Diamond presented an overview of the development phase of the Nova Scotia Forest Action Plan.

At annual meetings of the working group until 2003, additional action plans will be brought forward, as required, and the group will participate in ongoing monitoring and evaluation activities in cooperation with the National Forest Strategy Coalition.

Sector Committee Reports

Community Development Sector

Chair: Don Burgoyne

The role of the Community Development Sector is to promote government and community action to address issues related to community development or community economic development throughout Nova Scotia.

Community Development Training

Recognizing that community development training is critical to successful community development, the CD Sector hosted several meetings of Community Development Training Providers throughout the year.

During this time CD Sector members and Community Development Training Providers reviewed the range of training offerings in the province. Meeting facilitators led the group on one occasion through a process to identify the major elements of community economic development training and capabilities required by trainers. A subsequent session took a closer look at current diploma and certificate programs.

It is expected the process will lead to the development of province-wide criteria and standards.

Surplus Goods and Equipment

Kitchen Meetings identified that information about the availability of surplus goods and equipment would be of benefit to non-profit community development organizations in rural communities.

Representatives from the Kitchen Meetings then met with government officials responsible for implementing proposed recommendations. The issue of better access to information concerning the disposition of surplus goods and equipment was seen as achievable, and representatives from the Department of Finance and the Department of Transportation and Public Works asked for the Community Development Sector's assistance.

The departments acted on recommendations concerning the development and distribution of a brochure to raise awareness about the availability of surplus goods and equipment.

In June 1999, the legislature approved allowing for easier access to surplus goods and equipment by non-profit community organizations.

Electronic Commerce

The CD Sector identified the challenges and opportunities afforded by electronic commerce as significant to the sustainability of our rural communities. While issues related to electronic commerce are more focused than "technology" or "information technology," it is still a very broad issue.

The CD and Taxation Sectors met and discussed approaches and concerns surrounding electronic commerce, with a specific interest in how this will affect rural Nova Scotia.

The Sector feels it can help by using Kitchen Meetings to determine the extent of technology use in rural communities and to see where the gaps and needs exist. The Sector has begun planning for work in this area.

Response to *Towards Responsive Education*

The Community Development Sector heard a presentation on the Human Resources Sector's discussion paper *Towards Responsive Education*. Dr. Charles MacDonald, UCCB, met with local educators, trainers, and business people to discuss issues raised in the paper.

The group prepared and the Sector forwarded a response that made several recommendations with respect to GEDs, correspondence courses, and the licensing of private trade schools.

Genuine Progress Indicators

The CD Sector has been asked to assist with the recognition of Genuine Progress Indicators (GPI) role at the community level. Voluntary Planning will be asked to encourage the government to support using GPI for planning. GPI points out the limitations in traditional methods of measuring progress.

The CD Sector has heard about the process in place in Kings County to involve citizens in developing ways to measure genuine progress and to develop a genuine progress index.

The Sector will review the project with a view to working towards making recommendations to government for the inclusion of GPI in its approach to community development.

Construction Sector

Co-chairs: John Dow
Ben Chisholm

Ben Chisholm was appointed by the Mainland Nova Scotia Building and Construction Trades Council to serve as Labour Co-chair of the Construction Sector. Robert Radchuck sent a letter of appreciation to outgoing Co-chair Fern Tardif for his long-standing commitment to the organization.

The Construction Sector has not been active for the past two years and was slated to be placed in abeyance, to be reconvened should issues arise. During the past year, Voluntary Planning was asked to consider facilitating a seminar to explore the opportunities for the Nova Scotia construction industry in the growing Atlantic oil and gas industry. This would have provided an opportunity for the committee to work on an issue of interest to all construction industry players.

It was hoped the seminar would bring together construction company owners/operators, contractors, designers, construction labour representatives, and government agencies to discuss the industry's experience in recent oil and gas projects and how to prepare for the future.

While many of those contacted to be participants saw the benefit of a broad range of players meeting to review their experience in the gas project and look to the future, there was no agreement on what type of forum would be best. Also, there was a feeling that such a session should wait until the Sable Project was completed and there has been time for the individual players to carry out their own internal review of events before attempting to meet in a public forum.

While the timing did not seem to be right this past year, there may be an opportunity for Voluntary Planning to offer its services in the coming months or year to provide a forum where the industry participants can meet.

Energy Sector

Chair: John Woods

Overview

The Energy Sector represents a broad range of interests in energy—including suppliers, producers, and consumers—providing a forum in which the key players can discuss public policy. The members come from around the province and from the various components in the energy industry, including representation from three labour unions and energy users. There are members who understand petroleum, electricity, geothermal, natural gas, coal, and wind. Staff from the Department of Natural Resources and the Petroleum Directorate are resource members of the committee.

Oil and Gas Industry

A major focus for the Energy Sector in the past two years has been the range of oil and gas projects under way on the east coast and the opportunities the industry presents to Nova Scotia.

The Sector has taken an active role during the regulatory process for gas distribution acting as interveners during hearings.

The Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board hearing process for the distribution of natural gas in Nova Scotia took place from April 12, 1999 to the end of July. As an intervenor, the Energy Sector had an opportunity to make a final submission. The overall message was that the Review Board should avoid imposing unnecessary regulatory burden while still fulfilling its mandate of protecting the public interest. The Sector also registered with the Board as an interested party in a hearing regarding a dispute between Semptra Atlantic Gas and the Halifax Regional Municipality.

Other topics

Over the past year, the Energy Sector:

- provided input on the Human Resources paper *Towards Responsive Education* as well as the Fiscal Management Task Force process
- considered the mandates of organizations involved in technology to determine whether there was a role for a technology committee under the Voluntary Planning structure

- explored ways to recognize Nova Scotia inventor Abraham Gesner
- monitored Nova Scotia Power rate applications to the Utility and Review Board related to load retention time-of-use rates
- heard presentations on the newly formed Electricity Consumers Alliance of Nova Scotia, and on the volatility of gas and fuel oil prices by the Canadian Petroleum Products Institute

Nova Scotia Energy Strategy

One of the key projects the Sector is ready to pursue with the Department of Natural Resources is the development of a provincial energy strategy.

The last provincial energy plan was released in 1985. In 1990-91, a consultation process took place to update the plan; however, a final strategy was not completed. Since then several important new issues have emerged, such as global climate change, arrival of natural gas, and electricity deregulation. There is an opportunity for Voluntary Planning to work with the provincial government in developing a provincial energy strategy.

Environment and Economy Sector

Chair: Owen Evans

The Environment and Economy Sector, chaired by Owen Evans, works through two sub-committees, the Water/Wastewater Sub-Committee and the Waste Management Sub-Committee.

The Sector Chair met with the Deputy Minister of Environment to discuss how the Sector activities correspond with the department's business plan and to ensure the support of the department for sub-committee work. The department responded positively towards the Sector's past and planned activities.

The Sector Committee developed a submission to the Fiscal Management Task Force noting the need for environmental education and encouraging a cost/benefit analysis of environmental issues. The Waste Management Sub-Committee, chaired by Calla Farn, is reviewing sections of the Nova Scotia Environment Act dealing with Waste-Resource Management as well as the Regulations Respecting Solid Waste-Resource Management. These comments will be forwarded to the department upon completion. Calla Farn has also been representing the Sector as the Environment and Economy member of the Voluntary Planning Board.

The Water/Waste Water Sub-Committee focused its attention on alternative methods of sewage disposal in rural Nova Scotia. The sub-committee became aware that the departments of the Environment and Housing and Municipal Affairs were developing a sewage strategy. The sub-committee believed this document necessary for its deliberations and deferred its activities until the document becomes available.

Fisheries and Marine Core Group

Chair: Daniel W. MacInnes, Ph.D.

The Fisheries and Marine Core Group held its first meeting on October 1 and discussed the broad and complex issues addressing the fishery and whether the formation of a fisheries sector committee would provide a meaningful role in developing and recommending long-term policies to address fisheries and related issues.

After five meetings of discussions evolving over pressing issues impacting the fisheries and appropriate response mechanisms, the group agreed that a Fisheries and Integrated Coastal Policy Sector Committee should be created with the following mandate:

Through the Board of Voluntary Planning, the Sector provides a vehicle to develop and recommend policies for fisheries and related issues within the context of integrated coastal management, so as to promote economic, ecological and social sustainability in coastal Nova Scotia.

The Core Group also developed and approved terms of reference for the proposed new committee.

Membership will include:

- persons working in fisheries, coastal, or marine activities
- representatives from the federal and provincial governments
- academics and consultants
- members of NGOs, community groups, and municipalities with mandates affecting the environment, coastal recreation/tourism, and coastal communities.

Fisheries and Marine Core Group Chair Dan MacInnes made a presentation to the Voluntary Planning Board on March 23, 2000, outlining the proposal to formulate the Fisheries and Integrated Coastal Policy Sector.

Chair MacInnes is representing the Fisheries and Integrated Coastal Policy Sector Committee on the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture Minister's Conference, a provincial forum established to address operational issues affecting the provincial fishery.

On January 20, 2000, the Coastal Communities Network sponsored a Meeting on Government Wharves in Nova Scotia Communities, in Herring Cove, which was attended by the Sector Coordinator, who serves on CCN's Marine Infrastructure Committee. The purpose of the meeting was to address building a strategy that will discuss common concerns regarding the future of Nova Scotia wharves.

Forest Sector

Chair: Peter Duinker, Ph.D.

The Forest Sector Committee adopted a two-pronged approach to guide its deliberations during the year. The agenda is structured under Foreground, or immediate issues, and Background, or ongoing issues that are monitored over time and acted upon as required. Foreground issues for 1999 were the Sector's climate change workshop and submission, input to the State of the Environment Reporting, and assisting LRCC with its Nova Scotia Forest Action Plan commitment. Background issues include taxation, forest certification, value-added product, legislation and regulations on wood sustainability, and wildlife habitat/endangered species.

On July 8, 1999, Sector Chair Duinker wrote to the Department of Natural Resources to convey the Sector's comments regarding the draft Wood Sustainability Regulations. The correspondence noted that 30 days' response time was insufficient for meaningful consultations on matters of this level of detail and importance. It also commented that the guidelines were not a strong enough solution to ensure ecosystem conservation on all forest lands, regardless of ownership. Because of the short deadline for response, Sector members with specific comments corresponded directly with the department.

Mark Gourley, policy analyst with ACOA in Moncton, provided a presentation on "The Wood Industry in Atlantic Canada: A Focus on Value Added" at the Sector Committee meeting of December 2, 1999.

On November 24, 1999, the Sector Committee hosted a Truro workshop on Climate Change and Forests in Nova Scotia: Exploring the Basics. The workshop attracted 20 participants, and was led by Robert Stewart of the Canadian Forest Service in Ottawa and Sector Chair Duinker. The morning session was open to all persons interested in the topic. In the afternoon, Sector members developed a report, which was submitted on December 6 to the Co-chairs of the Voluntary Planning Climate Change Consultation.

The Forest Sector's submission noted that forests represent a huge opportunity for mitigation actions designed to increase the net amount of carbon stored in provincial ecosystems, and that forests dominate our land base, so any unwanted effects of a changing climate on forest ecosystems will affect all Nova Scotians. It recommended that, in terms of forests, a provincial climate change strategy must focus as much on adaptation to a changing climate as it does on mitigation.

Federal Finance Minister Paul Martin wrote to Chair Duinker on February 1, 2000, in response to a letter from the Chair regarding the tax-related implications of managing private woodlots in Nova Scotia. The Minister has instructed his officials to determine whether the current tax system unduly discourages sustainable forestry practices.

Human Resources Sector

Chair: Amery Boyer

The Human Resources Sector Committee provides a forum for stakeholders to develop, through the Voluntary Planning process, broad spectrum human resource policy advice to government.

The stakeholders are defined as labour, business, education and training institutions, government, non-government, industry and professional organizations, workers, the unemployed, community groups, and learners.

Members discussed and responded to the release of *Towards Responsive Education*, a valuable response to the Voluntary Planning Fiscal Management Task Force's call for submissions and a concerted effort to conduct discussions with other Sectors of Voluntary Planning.

Towards Responsive Education

During the year, the Human Resources Sector released and mailed out 1200 copies of *Towards Responsive Education*. A news release, followed by advertisements in provincial newspapers, called for response from Nova Scotians.

The report identified existing strengths and weaknesses in the education system for providers of education and training in Nova Scotia to discuss.

Throughout the past several months members have reviewed written comments from citizens, departments, and other sectors of Voluntary Planning. The first round of responses to *Towards Responsive Education* gave the Sector some valuable clues about what respondents feel are the most alarming gaps or pressing issues to be addressed.

The Sector expects to develop prioritized themes and a plan to engage key stakeholders in advising on how to address each issue, including the possibility of a conference.

Response to Voluntary Planning's Fiscal Management Task Force

Members of the Human Resources Sector formed an ad hoc subcommittee during the year to provide much-needed advice to Voluntary Planning's Fiscal Management Task Force. Many aspects of the submission were incorporated in the final report from the task force.

Cross-sector Liaison

A strength of Voluntary Planning has always been its ability to address issues across Sectors. The Human Resources Sector met with several other Voluntary Planning Sectors to generate feedback on *Towards Responsive Education* and to receive advice on human resource issues of concern.

Land Resources Coordinating Council (LRCC)

Chair: Pam Harrison

Pam Harrison assumed the position of Chair of LRCC, with thanks extended to outgoing Chair Vernon McCully for several years of service.

LRCC agreed to be the lead agent for the implementation of a commitment under the Nova Scotia Action Plan, in response to the National Forest Strategy. Under Commitment 8.10, LRCC will promote regional landscape management and planning, including private woodlots. This will be accomplished by developing closer links with other associations concerned with forest tenure and other land uses, in support of optimal land allocation and use among competing users.

A broad range of presentations were made at the LRCC meetings, including presentations from the following individuals/organizations:

Bert Seely, Land Information Services,
Dept. of Housing and Municipal Affairs

Brian McCulloch, Ducks Unlimited

George Foote, Department of Natural Resources, Climate Change

Nancy McInnis Leek, Department of Natural Resources,
Nova Scotia Forest Strategy

Scott Milsom, Nova Scotia Coastal Communities Network

Michael Haynes, Trans Canada Trail

Audrey Manzer, Clean Nova Scotia

Terry MacIntyre, Nova Scotia Salmon Association

On March 22, 2000, Chair Harrison wrote to Environment Minister John Chataway and Natural Resources Minister Ernie Fage to endorse the valuable work of Clean Nova Scotia as an important organization to address evolving environmental issues in our province. The letter asked that the departments give careful consideration to utilizing Clean Nova Scotia as a cost-effective agent to address emerging and ongoing issues such as climate change and environmental education.

Mineral Resources Sector

Chair: Richard Potter, Ph.D.

On May 11, 1999, the Mineral Resources Sector hosted Minerals Forum 1999—Investing in Development of Nova Scotia's Mineral Resources. The purpose of the forum was to discuss opportunities for improving the investment climate for the exploration and development of the province's mineral resources. The 35 participants attending the forum represented various segments of the industry, the financial and legal professions, and government.

The Sector Committee prepared a final report in June, which made recommendations to government. These recommendations included a significant government commitment to support the industry, an education and awareness program, financial measures, improved information to industry, strategic marketing of our investment potential, improvements to legislation, as well as measures to correct the negative perception of the industry. On June 21, 1999, Sector Chair Potter and the Sector Coordinator met with the Deputy Minister of Natural Resources, Dan Graham, and his senior staff to present the report.

On September 30, 1999, the Sector Chair wrote to the Minister of Natural Resources to arrange a meeting to introduce him to Voluntary Planning and to discuss important mining issues, particularly those arising from Mineral Resources Forum 1999.

The Sector hosted a meeting of the non-government organizations associated with mineral resources in the province on September 20. The meeting included the presidents of the Nova Scotia Chamber of Mineral Resources, Nova Scotia Mining Society, and Nova Scotia Prospectors Association, the Executive Director of the Chamber, and Voluntary Planning's Mineral Resources Chair. This was the first known meeting of these organizations. The meeting was successful in updating participants on the organizations' roles and identifying areas of future cooperation, including harmonizing underground coal regulations across the country and presenting a common voice on the federal closure of Devco mines.

Taxation Sector

Co-chairs: Ed Harris
John D'Orsay

Annual Meeting with the Minister of Finance

Minister of Finance Neil LeBlanc met with the Taxation Sector in what has become an annual open discussion between the committee and the Minister and senior staff of the Department of Finance. The Minister expressed his department's support of the committee's annual Taxation Workshop. He outlined the state of the province's finances and some of the issues that must be addressed.

Annual Taxation Workshop

On January 7, 2000, some 40 members of Voluntary Planning along with government staff met to discuss the preliminary report from the Fiscal Management Task Force and, at the request of the Department of Finance, the Province's tax credits programs.

Following remarks by the Minister of Finance and the Chair of the Fiscal Management Task Force, participants broke into three small working groups to discuss these issues. Because the Fiscal Management Task Force operated with and through Voluntary Planning, and because the content of the final report will have far-reaching effects on the economy of Nova Scotia, participants devoted much time and energy to the major thrust of the document. Specifically, they focused on core functions of government, planning and accountability, lifelong learning, and the Province's financial position and practices.

The results of the discussions were forwarded to the Minister of Finance.

Over the past year, the Taxation Sector:

- forwarded a submission to the Fiscal Management Task Force
- provided advice to the Department of Economic Development on community bonds
- forwarded comments to the Minister of Finance on a range of tax credit instruments

- met with Department of Community Services staff to discuss programs and services
- received a general overview on budgetary issues from Department of Finance senior staff

Tourism Sector

Chair: Joan Waldron

Voluntary Planning Tourism provides a secretariat for the Advisory Committee for the Mi'kma'wey Debert project, a cultural centre proposal for the Paleo-Indian site of Debert. On October 4-5, 1999, the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (CMM) hosted a First Nations community consultation to broaden and solidify the planning base for this challenging project. The session was facilitated by Voluntary Planning Executive Director Elizabeth Mills. Ms Mills wrote to CMM on November 16, 1999, to convey the meeting notes from the Mi'kma'wey Debert consultation. More recently, the Debert project proposal has been delayed because of Mi'kmaq priority issues surrounding the Marshall Supreme Court decision and the Sable Gas pipeline project.

Tourism Chair Waldron and Elizabeth Mills met with Tourism Minister Rodney MacDonald on September 7 to brief the Minister and to discuss evolving issues of importance to tourism in Nova Scotia.

The Tourism Sector Committee developed and forwarded a submission to the Voluntary Planning Fiscal Management Task Force on November 22, 1999. The correspondence offered its support for the work of the task force, but emphasized the significance of tourism to the provincial economy. The submission was appended by individual responses on issues for which there was no committee consensus.

Chair Waldron worked with Voluntary Planning's Transportation Sector Chair in developing criteria for highway rest area site designation. Recommendations were forwarded to the Department of Transportation and Public Works in March 2000.

Commencing in the summer 1999, the Sector convened planning meetings and developed terms of reference for the proposed Atlantic Air Access Partnership. The purpose of this initiative is to coordinate efforts in Atlantic Canada, through the convening of a stakeholder round table, in order to collectively increase regional passenger and cargo traffic.

Sector Chair Waldron wrote to Senator Bernie Boudreau on December 16, 1999 to seek his support in having Transport Canada meet with Icelandair to resolve the carrier's request for increased frequency from Iceland to Nova Scotia. On February 22, the Senator wrote back, thanking the Chair for her correspondence and noting the subsequent federal announcement of the fourth weekly flight.

On December 15, the Sector Committee met in a joint session with the TIANS Board for a Tourism Partnership Council Product Development Committee presentation, Product/Market Match Study.

Concern over access to Nova Scotia's coast has been raised by Sector members and is an issue shared by other groups, including Voluntary Planning's Fisheries and Marine Core Group, provincial government departments, individual Nova Scotians, businesses, and many organizations. The Sector has agreed to host a small but representative meeting of stakeholders, by invitation, to probe this issue.

The Sector will be working with the Nova Scotia Tourism Partnership Council and other partners in developing an updated tourism strategy. Voluntary Planning was a partner in the development of the 1996 *Strategy for Tourism*. A progress report on Voluntary Planning's role in implementing the 1996 strategy was prepared and provided to partners on the Tourism Strategy Implementation Team.

Trade/Investment Negotiations and Agreements Committee

Chair: Peter Hill

In recognition of the influence of the global economy on local decision-making capabilities, Voluntary Planning established a committee for Trade/Investment Negotiations and Agreements.

The committee aims to consider the impact of trade and investment agreements on the Province's ability to implement and maintain regional development planning. Originally formed to review the implications of the Multilateral Agreement on Trade and Investment (MAI) the committee contributed to the Province's position on that agreement.

Current work includes monitoring other negotiations including the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Free Trade Agreement for the Americas (FTAA) and ongoing discussions on the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

The committee comprises a small group of academic, business, and labour representatives with a background in trade policy or local development or both. The committee is assisted by a provincial trade representative.

Members of the committee are concerned that these processes could result in rules that would limit the Province's ability to implement policies and planning procedures for the benefit of its citizens.

Among the priorities of the Trade Committee are the province's current water resources, potential needs, and policies and regulations on the use and commercialization of water resource.

The Committee has met with federal government trade negotiators in their efforts to consult with Canadian non-government organizations (NGOs) and has identified other areas in which provincial responsibilities may be affected.

Transportation Sector

Chair: George Wheeliker

The Transportation Sector examines issues of transportation carriers, shippers, passengers, and other users.

Working jointly with the Tourism Sector since 1997, the Transportation Sector's focus has been on two major projects:

- the development of a provincial transportation strategic framework
- highway safety and rest areas

Strategic Framework

In January, the document *The Way Ahead— A Strategic Framework for Coordinating Transportation Development in Nova Scotia* was submitted by Voluntary Planning to the provincial government. This was the culmination of two years of intensive efforts by a small project committee and a broad-based advisory committee administered under the umbrella of Voluntary Planning. The process also included stakeholder consultations across the province and public and private sector interviews. It has been a true partnership of both government and non-government interests.

The project committee, facilitated by John Gratwick, comprised representatives from:

- Alliance of Manufacturers and Exporters Canada
- Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
- Canadian Auto Workers Union (CAW-Canada)
- Department of Transportation and Public Works
- Department of Economic Development
- Transport Canada
- Voluntary Planning

The 60-member advisory committee was chaired by George Wheeliker and brought together representatives from all transportation modes—key service providers as well as major service users.

During the past year, the project committee held workshops with the advisory committee, in Bible Hill on June 23 and in Halifax on September 22, to review the framework and to move to the next stage: developing realistic actions and identifying or confirming the responsible partners and lead stakeholder for each action.

A number of special guests attended the September workshop. Gordon Balser, Minister of Economic Development and Transportation and Public Works; Ed Cramm, Deputy Minister of Economic Development; Martin Delaney, Acting Deputy Minister of Department of Transportation and Public Works; and Howard Windsor, Deputy Minister of Tourism and Culture, attended part of the workshop and met informally with participants. Also in attendance was Gerry Berigan, Regional Director Atlantic Region, Transport Canada, who made a presentation on national transportation initiatives.

Based on the workshop input, the framework document, including 33 action items, was finalized and approved by the Voluntary Planning Board in September. In late December the document received approval from the Management Committee of the Economic Diversification Agreement, which funded the project. Following this, it was submitted to the Ministers of Economic Development, Tourism and Culture, and Transportation and Public Works.

In their responses to the submission, the provincial ministers offered their support for the framework and associated actions. For those actions where the provincial government was identified as a lead, departments agreed to advance them through their business planning process. Many of the initiatives are already under way.

There is a recognition that we can no longer take for granted that the province's transportation needs will be met by government alone—that active and coordinated participation by government, industry, business, and individuals is the single most important ingredient for successful implementation. For its part, Voluntary Planning has offered to take-on a monitoring and facilitating role where needed, in seeing the transportation actions carried out.

Highway Safety and Rest Areas

In March 2000, a submission was made to the Department of Transportation and Public Works with recommendations on how the provincial government should proceed with the development of highway safety and rest areas in Nova Scotia. This was the completion of a two-year initiative led by a joint industry and government working group.

The need for highway safety and rest areas in Nova Scotia has been a subject of long-standing interest to the Tourism and Transportation Sectors of Voluntary Planning. The Highway Safety and Rest Areas Working Group facilitated by Voluntary Planning began meeting in late 1997 to explore the opportunities for rest area development. The Working Group was co-chaired by Joan Waldron and George Wheeliker and comprised representatives from:

- Atlantic Provinces Trucking Association
- Department of Tourism and Culture
- Department of Transportation and Public Works
- Nova Scotia Forest Products Association (during 1997)
- Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia
- Truckers Association of Nova Scotia
- Voluntary Planning

Safety for both truckers and the motoring public travelling Nova Scotia's highways was the primary factor in considering rest areas. National Safety Code regulations limit the hours truckers are permitted to drive, yet there are few safe places for them to stop. As a result, they have been making use of the highway exit ramps and toll booth facilities, which were not intended for this purpose. A better alternative is needed. Improved safety for truckers using provincial highways would mean that all motorists are provided with a safer driving environment.

At a meeting of the Working Group with the Voluntary Planning Tourism and Transportation Sectors held in June, 1998, the committees discussed a position paper developed by the Department of Transportation and Public Works on a recommended approach to establishing and managing highway safety and rest areas. The approach recommended invites private sector participation.

Sector members were in agreement with the need for highway rest areas for safety reasons. There were concerns, however, about the impact on existing businesses in small communities. They concluded that they need to consult with local communities before going forward with a project in an area.

Based on the Department of Transportation and Public Work's position paper and information gathered to that point, the Working Group developed draft criteria on the features that should be considered as minimum requirements in the development of a rest area. This became a basis for discussion with representatives of the municipalities, local tourist associations, chambers of commerce or business committees, regional development authorities, and regional economic development offices in three regions where truckers frequently stop on exit ramps.

Based on the input received from these community sessions, the Working Group developed a series of recommendations which were approved by the Voluntary Planning Board and submitted to the Minister of Transportation and Public Works. The submission includes the recommendation that the department, in consultation with the departments of Tourism and Culture and the Department of Economic Development, proceed with three pilot projects. The recommendations also highlight the importance of the provincial government continuing to involve the local communities through the regional development authorities.

Appendices

Reports

Climate Change

- *Report on the Climate Change Consultation Process*, November 1999

Fiscal Management Task Force

- *Interim Report—Shaping Nova Scotia's Future*, December 20, 1999
- *Final Report—Taking Control of Our Future*, January 31, 2000

Mineral Resources Sector

- *Minerals Forum '99—Investing in Nova Scotia's Mineral Resources, Final Report*, June 1999

Nova Scotia Forest Action Plan Working Group

- *Final Report: Development Phase of the Nova Scotia Action Plan for the National Forest Strategy, 1998–2003*, September 1999

Taxation Sector

- *Final Report of Annual Taxation Sector Workshop*

Transportation Sector

- *The Way Ahead—A Strategic Framework for Transportation Development in Nova Scotia*
- *Criteria for the Development of Highway Safety and Rest Areas*

Calendar of Special Events for 1999–2000

1999

- May 11 Mineral Resources Sector hosted Minerals Forum '99—Investing in Development of Nova Scotia's Mineral Resources
- June 23 One-day workshop held with transportation stakeholders to review transportation strategic framework document and to move to the next stage—the development of actions.
- June 26 Wide distribution and call for response to the Human Resource Sector's report, *Towards Responsive Education*
- September 14 Conducted first in a series of 11 community presentations to business and labour audiences around the province to promote the benefits of Non-binding Arbitration
- September 22 One-day workshop held with transportation stakeholders to finalize action items as part of the transportation strategic framework initiative.
- October 4-5 Voluntary Planning facilitates First Nations community consultation on Mi'kmawey Debert project.
- November 24 Forest Sector Committee hosted workshop on Climate Change and Forests in Nova Scotia: Exploring the Basics
- November Six consultation workshops were held around the province on climate change
- December 20 Interim Report of Voluntary Planning's Fiscal Management Task Force released

2000

- January 7 Sixth Annual Taxation Sector Workshop
- January 31 Final Report of Voluntary Planning's Fiscal Management Task Force released

Voluntary Planning Executive

Mr. Robert P. Radchuck
 Mr. Jim Eisenhauer
 Mr. Leo Dillman (ex officio)
 Mr. John D'Orsay
 Mr. John Dow
 Mr. Ron Grant
 Ms Heather Henderson
 Ms Marilyn MacDonald
 Dr. Sonia Thon
 Ms Joan Waldron

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 Incoming Chair, Board

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 Mr. Greg Blanchard
 Ms Amery Boyer
 Mr. Don Burgoyne
 Mr. Ben Chisholm
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 Mr. Leo Dillman
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 Dr. Lynette Mensah
 Mr. Alex Mombourquette
 Dr. Richard Potter
 Dr. Sonia Thon
 Ms Joan Waldron
 Mr. George Wheeliker
 Mr. John Woods, P.Eng.

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 Member at Large, Labour
 Chair, Human Resources
 Chair, Community Development
 Co-Chair, Construction Sector
 Co-Chair, Taxation
 Chief Executive Officer (ex officio)
 Member at Large, Academe
 Co-Chair, Construction
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 Member at Large
 Representing Owen Evans, Chair,
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 Co-Chair, Taxation
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 Deputy Minister, Economic Development
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 Chair, Mineral Resources
 Member at Large, Labour
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Mr. Ed Cramm
Ms. Ida Scott
Mr. Fern Tardif

Voluntary Planning Staff

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Rita Fraser
Jim Gordon
Heather LaRoche-Mills
Charles McKenna
Penelope Russell
Yvonne Urquhart

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Sector Coordinator
Sector Coordinator
Office Manager
Sector Coordinator
Logistics Coordinator
Secretary

Staff Serving Part of the Year

Karen Ballesteros

Secretary

Staff on Secondment

Carole MacDonald
Elizabeth Mills
Peggy Tibbo-Cameron

Sector Coordinator
Executive Director
Sector Coordinator